

About your slow-worm...

(Block capitals please!)

Who found the slow-worm?

Name:

Address:

.....

..... Postcode:

What did you find?

Please write numbers observed in boxes below:

Male: Female: Juvenile: Not sure:

Where did you see your slow-worm?

It is really important that you help us to gather accurate information. Please give us a brief description of where you found the slow-worm. If possible include an Ordnance Survey grid reference and/or a full address and postcode:

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When did you find your slow-worm? (i.e. the date)

Date: Month: Year:

If you know where slow-worms have been found in the past, (even if your memory is a little vague), please let us have us as much information as you can - hopefully we can return to the site and find out if they're still there.

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Could we contact you for further information if necessary?

Yes: No:

Please return this form to:

**David Orchard, Vice Chair - ARG UK,
106 Thicketford Road, Bolton, BL2 2LU**

Alternatively, please e-mail: argsl@btinternet.com

Some slow-worm facts...

Slow-worms are completely harmless and protected by law against killing and injuring (as are all snakes and lizards). They are sometimes found in compost heaps and are helpful to the gardener as their main food is small slugs.

Slow-worms can grow up to 50 cm long but are more usually 30-40 cm in length. They can live up to 30 years in the wild... and 50 years in captivity!

It is thought that slow-worms reproduce every other year. Unlike most lizards they do not lay eggs, instead giving birth to between 6 and 18 live young. The juveniles start life approximately 5 cm long and take 3 years to reach maturity.

Predators of slow-worms include rats and domestic cats. When attacked by a predator, slow-worms can shed their tail as a defence mechanism and although this quickly heals it never fully re-grows,

If you'd like to find out more about the conservation of amphibians and reptiles, take a look at these websites:

www.arguk.org

and

www.herpconstrust.org.uk

This leaflet was produced as part of the North West Slow-worm Hunt, a partnership project between the Amphibian and Reptile Group of South Lancashire and Lancashire Wildlife Trust.



Amphibian and Reptile
Group of South Lancashire



The North West Slow-Worm Hunt

A project to raise awareness of slow-worms and their habitats



photo: John Baker

Slow-worms are scarce in many parts of Britain, but with your help we can find out more about these elusive and enchanting animals!



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What does a slow-worm look like?

At first sight, you could be forgiven for thinking that a slow-worm is a snake. However despite the name a slow-worm isn't slow, nor is it a worm...in fact it's a legless lizard.

Slow-worms spend much of their time underground where legs would be of little use and so during the process of evolution their legs have disappeared.

Although slow-worms resemble a snake, there are a number of differences. In particular slow-worms can shed their tail, they have eyelids (not present in snakes) and a shiny metallic appearance due to their small, polished scales. These small scales make the animals smooth and silk-like to the touch.



Male slow-worm - photo : Roy Bradley

Males

Males are a uniform colour and are various shades of silver, copper or brown. Some have small pale blue spots on the back.

Females



Female slow-worm - photo : Roy Bradley

Females are generally a coppery brown with black flanks (sides) and a fine black stripe down the back.

Juveniles



Juvenile slow-worm - photo : Roy Bradley

Juveniles are pale gold with black flanks and a thin stripe along their back - very similar to the adult females. As the slow-worms mature, the females retain these markings whilst the males lose them.

Please tell us if you find a slow-worm!

Slow-worms spend much of their time underground so are normally difficult to find. The best places to find slow-worms are in compost heaps or under old bits of wood, carpet or tin lying on the ground in sunny locations. If you are lucky, you may find a slow-worm basking in an open sunny spot in the early morning or late afternoon, but this is unusual.

Slow-worms are a priority BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) species, which means that local authorities have a responsibility to look after their slow-worm sites and to think about slow-worms when considering planning applications. Unless we know about the presence of slow-worms on a site a whole colony could be lost, but if we know where they are we're able to protect them.

If you find a slow-worm, please let us know by completing the form overleaf and returning it to the address at the bottom of the next page.

If you've been lucky enough to see a slow-worm in a compost heap, your information would be useful to the national slow-worm compost survey, details of which can be found at www.narrs.org.uk/recordcompost.htm.

Your records will be shared with the National Biodiversity Network, though your contact details will not be made public.